

## **Historic, Archive Document**

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.



A317  
Ag82

---

---

## LECTURE SERIES

# DESIGN

# IN

# THE

# FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

---

---



---

---

**GRADUATE SCHOOL**  
**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**

---

---

AD-33 Bookplate  
(1-63)

NATIONAL

A  
G  
R  
I  
C  
U  
L  
T  
U  
R  
A  
L



LIBRARY

95403

A317

Ag82

DESIGN  
IN  
THE  
FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

---

U. S. DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE  
NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL LIBRARY

DEC 15 1965

C & R-PREP.

**GRADUATE SCHOOL, U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**



95403

# DESIGN

Copyright 1965

This book is published and sold by the Graduate School, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C.

DESIGNED BY GEORGE L. BAKA  
AND  
EDITED BY THEODORE R. CRANE

Price 3.00

## FOREWORD



This book brings together papers presented during the lecture series, DESIGN IN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT. The series was arranged by the Graduate School, U.S. Department of Agriculture, a self-supporting institution which since 1921 has carried on an educational program for federal employees. The presentations were made in the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Auditorium, U.S.D.A., in the autumn of 1964.

The purpose of this series was to reacquaint government administrators with the importance of design and to present concepts that would be helpful in making decisions pertaining to the arts. We have sought the free flow of ideas, even though this often thrust individual concepts into collision. We did not seek to present the opinions of the Graduate School or the Department of Agriculture.

Plans for the lecture series were drawn up by a committee of architects, artists, critics, museum directors, and others associated with the arts. The chairman was Frank Getlein, art critic of the Washington Evening Star. Assisting him were: Joseph Carreiro, director of faculty, Philadelphia College of Art; Gerald Nordland, director, Washington Gallery of Modern Art; Mrs. Chloethiel Woodard Smith, architect, Woodard and Associates; Richard Virgo, Office of Information, U.S. Department of Agriculture; Wolf Von Eckardt, art critic of the Washington Post; and Karel Yasko, assistant commissioner for design and construction, General Services Administration.

We are indebted to many people who have helped us present the lecture series. Among those who should be mentioned particularly are David M. Granahan, Chief of the Exhibits Service, U.S.D.A., who conceived of the series; George Baka, who designed this publication and the program for the lecture series; and Theodore R. Crane, who edited this publication.

JOHN B. HOLDEN  
Director

## CONTENTS

**1 FOREWORD**

John B. Holden

**5 INTRODUCTION**

Frank Getlein

**11 THE CULTURAL OSMOSIS**

August Heckscher

**21 THE GRAPHIC ARTS**

Ivan Chermayeff

**27 INDUSTRIAL DESIGN**

Eliot Noyes

**3**

**35 ARCHITECTURE**

Francis Lethbridge

**43 PANEL DISCUSSION:**

Applications of Creative Design

S. Dillon Ripley

John B. Cabot

N. E. Halaby

Anita J. Moller

**57 SUMMARY**

Wolf Von Eckardt

## **INTRODUCTION**

There was a day when Thomas Jefferson could enter anonymously a competition to design the Executive Mansion—and lose. There was a day when the United States government, in throwing up the great dome of the Capitol, could forward the technical state of the art of the then new cast-iron building. There was a day when that same government could throw wide its nets for talent and even genius and enlist their support in decorating the walls of government buildings from the headquarters of the executive departments to a new post office at a crossroads in Wisconsin or a summer colony in Delaware.

Those days are gone. They ended about twenty-five years ago, with the coming of World War II and the subsequent junking by Congress of Federal art programs. Like Lucky Strike Green, if you remember that, Federal interest in art went to war and never came back.

The reasons are varied. One of them surely is the postwar discovery that some American artists had been friendly to communist organizations even before the United States government became the ally of the biggest communist front of them all, the Soviet Union. Another is that excellence and the practitioners of excellence tend to be troublesome. Mediocrity never gave anyone any trouble.

Whatever the reasons for that long separation of art and the American government, that aggressive indifference on the part of government, that answering hostility by artists, the results became clear when the cold war between art and government gave some slight signs of ending during the Kennedy Administration. How totally accepted the separation had become may be seen in the surprise and enthusiasm that were the response to President and Mrs. Kennedy's request to the aging Pablo Casals that he come and play for them and their guests at the White House. The press response was that the artistic millenium was here. Yet this was a return performance for

Casals. He had played that date before. His last host at the White House had been Theodore Roosevelt.

Well, everyone doesn't have to like the cello.

So far, though, the reawakening of government interest in art has been pretty much confined to that kind of thing: Actors and musicians are invited in after dinner to perform for presidential dinner guests. It's a gain: It could have been Liberace. Or medals are passed around, with even-handed justice, one to Andrew Wyeth, one to Willem de Kooning. Another gain: It could have been Norman Rockwell.

Such was the general atmosphere when Dr. Holden summoned this committee to the Graduate School and asked it to whip up a lecture series on Design in the Federal Government. Nor has the atmosphere changed much since the lectures were duly delivered. The new administration is more committed, so far, to azaleas and tulips than it is to French pictures in the manner of its predecessor, but there's certainly nothing wrong with flowers. Discussion goes forward in Congress about how the government can help the artist and the art institution. A National Foundation will very likely come into existence to complement the labors of the National Council on the Arts.

The feeling of the committee from its very first meeting was that the relationship between art and government could be looked at the other way round. Maybe the artist could help the government. It seemed a fair bet that the great government patrons—the Medici in Florence, Pope Julius in Rome, Francis I in France—these rulers were less interested in what they could do for art than in what art could do for them.

Hence the committee, in a series of very stimulating meetings, put together a sequence of talks by a group of workers designed to explore what art could mean to government if government ever got over its built-in preference



for non-art and the mediocre. The outline of the series makes its purpose evident: Mr. Heckscher at the time knew, and probably still knows, more about the hundreds of relations between the arts and government than any living mind. He found out all these facts at the request of President Kennedy.

From that hopeful survey, the series moved through three obvious areas of cooperation: the millions of items of graphic design the government uses and misuses; its influence or lack of it for its money expended on furniture, equipment and the like; and the shape of its buildings. We were fortunate to obtain the thoughts and advocacy of three thoroughly committed experts: Mr. Chermayeff, Mr. Noyes and Mr. Lethbridge.

To pull all this together, the committee solicited a group within government, Messrs. Ripley, Cabot and Halaby and Miss Moller, to bring their own daily and yearly experience to bear and to note particular, small-scale efforts where some degree of success had been attained.

Even while the committee was having its luncheons in the basement of the Agricultural labyrinth, the Library of Congress brought in a new consultant in poetry, Reed Whittemore. It was his belief that he ought to do more than hang around that elaborate structure reading poetry aloud. He began to work toward bringing the poetic sensitivity to words into the service of government. He had the feeling that, on the whole, poets write better than bureaucrats. Perhaps the poets could do something for the politicians. It was the same approach as that of this lecture series.

The arts need no dole from government. Government, today as always, needs the services of art. The following pages suggest a few of the ways in which such service could be given.

FRANK GETLEIN  
Chairman

AUTHOR, JOURNALIST, NOW DIRECTOR OF THE  
PHILANTHROPIC TWENTIETH CENTURY FUND,  
AUGUST HECKSCHER BECAME A NATIONAL SPOKES-  
MAN FOR THE ARTS WHEN JOHN F. KENNEDY  
APPOINTED HIM SPECIAL CONSULTANT ON THE  
ARTS IN 1962. MR. HECKSCHER WAS CHIEF EDI-  
TORIAL WRITER FOR THE N. Y. HERALD TRIBUNE  
FROM 1948 TO 1956 AND WAS FOR FIVE YEARS CHAIR-  
MAN OF THE BOARD OF THE INTERNATIONAL COUN-  
CIL OF THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART.



# THE CULTURAL OSMOSIS

ADDRESS BY AUGUST HECKSCHER, NOVEMBER 10, 1964





## THE CULTURAL OSMOSIS

It is an honor to open this series on design in the federal government. That the series should be held at all is an encouragement to those who have felt that the government has a responsibility beyond the sphere of efficiency and integrity; that it fulfills its true functions only when it acts with a sense of excellence and a concern for aesthetic values. It seems a long while ago since I was called by the late President Kennedy to play a role in such a development. It was then considered a novel and indeed unprecedented idea. But in the few years which have actually passed, the idea has been accepted; the goal has become a recognized one within the government. Indeed a series of discussions such as we now initiate can, in the best sense, be taken for granted.

President Kennedy moved cautiously where the arts were concerned. He was wise, I believe, in seeing that genius comes from the depths of a society, expressing itself in unbidden and unpredictable ways. As a statesman he would not have wanted to be out on the fringe, fighting a lonely battle for cultural advance. Rather he waited and watched. He seemed sometimes surprised by the stir which his actions in this field produced, and was genuinely pleased as his administration came to be associated with a new brilliance and confidence in America's creative life. As the all-too-brief years of his term of office moved on, the arts did, indeed, seem to have an increasing significance in his mind. He came to feel that they were related to some of the highest hopes he had for his administration. They bespoke in his mind a sense of discipline, a will to pursue excellence, a spirit of searching and innovation. The great artists of the epoch seemed to have

something of unmistakable importance to say to their generation—and especially to one who sought to lead the people down new paths.

My hope was that the work which John F. Kennedy had begun would be carried on after his death. Obviously it was not easy for President Johnson to take up this cause. He had much else to do. It would have been understandable, moreover, had he felt that governmental concern with the arts was so uniquely related to his predecessor that others could hardly be expected to follow. But this, happily, was not to be the case. President Johnson early took the decision to connect his efforts in the cultural field with the establishment of the cultural center in Washington as a fitting memorial to John F. Kennedy. The chairman of its board, Roger Stevens, was made a presidential adviser. Mr. Johnson's feeling for the too often wasted and neglected beauties of the American landscape gave him a line of his own to pursue with vigor.

The Congress, meanwhile, continued to go forward. In December 1963 the Senate passed a bill which included a national advisory council on the arts and also an arts foundation. Later the first part of this bill was enacted by the House and made law. There is real hope that the President will support an arts foundation in the coming session.

Thus we have continued—and we have made progress. The government is actively committed to a concern with the arts as a matter of sensible and accepted policy. But there is still need for fresh and continuing thought if we are going to define the government's true interest in this field and give effective direction to its role.

May I stress at the beginning of this discussion my own conviction that the arts are to be interpreted broadly—especially insofar as government is to be concerned with them. Not so long ago in this country we tended to think that art resided only in forms recognized by tradition and patronized by an elite. The opera, theater, ballet, the solidly based museum or library: these seemed to be the institutional embodiments of all excellence, alone worthy of the community's interest and support. But our vision has been enlarged. We recognize art today as existing in unexpected forms and places, wherever the people go for delights of the spirit, for some influence that will lift them to a vision above the daily grind. Art is in the movies, it is (or it should be) on the television screen, it is in the plain objects of the world around us whenever they reveal some beauty of form and some appropriateness of form to function.

What is an art? It is almost anything which reaches above utility or necessity and seeks in some measure to conform to an ideal. Consider the work of the craftsman. His first task is to make what is needed. Then he discovers the object can be so made as to fulfill its function and at the same time answer to man's longing for harmony or perfection. At that moment the craftsman begins to become one with the artist. What is true of the simplest object can be true of man's vast and complex structures. His buildings, his cities, are first conceived of as fulfilling a need for shelter or defense. They are works: but they can become works of art.

Today's environment has become increasingly man-made. The natural world—which once provided the source of virtually all man's sensations and the material of his perceptions—is steadily in retreat. Where nature does abide, it is in large part because man has willed that it should do so. An age that has given us so great a power over physical things imposes particular responsibilities. We can make of this environment a dead and barren thing. If we do so, we shall cramp man's spirit and kill the impulse to creativity. We can, on the other hand, so enlarge our concept of the arts that we recognize in policy decisions and in day-to-day actions the necessity of bringing outward things into harmony with what the soul needs for its health. If in my own time in Washington I was able to con-

tribute anything of worth to the general discussion, I would like to think it was through an insistence on this point—the importance of stretching our concept of the arts so as to include the shape and quality of the environment.

You can readily see why, feeling this way, I stress the weight that we should give to good design within the scope of the national government. Good design has sometimes been talked of as if it were simply an attractive covering superimposed upon the realities beneath. I do not see it this way. It goes deeper; it touches, if the phrase is rightly understood, the essential nature of things. The design of an object is not added as an afterthought; it is the beginning, the original impulse, which ultimately finds its expression in the outward form. A thing is well designed when its purpose is clearly conceived, when its form is expressive and apt. It will then have what we call "style." Though it be as plain as an axe or a bottle, it will possess its own kind of beauty.



My first point, then, is that the arts be interpreted broadly. My second follows from the first: that concern with the arts be taken as a natural and continuing interest of government. It is natural in that every civilized country gives public expression to this concern. It is natural in that our own government acts upon all those matters which affect the well-being of the citizens.

During long periods in our national development it was almost entirely with material factors that the national government felt itself called upon to deal. In recent years, however, the well-being of the citizen has been ever more subtly and widely conceived. Qualitative issues, and not quantitative ones alone, have seemed its proper and inevitable concern. Whether it was eager to do so or not, government has found itself compelled to shape the attitudes and the techniques necessary for ordering questions of value.

Thus in recent years education, science, recreation and health have come increasingly within the field of statesmanship. These have all involved difficult and complex choices, somewhat different from those which the machinery of democracy has traditionally dealt with. To know whether one form of recrea-



tion is "better" than another—for example, whether parks should be kept in a state of natural wilderness or subdued to the capabilities of the city-bred tourist; or whether one kind of research in the field of science should take precedence over another—requires within the governmental process novel forms of evaluation and decision-making. Yet the national government has steadily advanced along such lines, not without blunders but with a realization that it could not do otherwise than proceed. For in the place of the older objective of serving the public welfare, there has grown up the newer and more delicate objective of serving what I have called the public happiness.

In this complex of fresh issues the arts naturally take their place. The citizens feel that the level of cultural advancement is almost as much related to their general well-being as the level of economic or scientific progress. They know that their own existence would be the poorer without an environment in which the spirit could find release—a world of outward forms bearing some affinity to the harmony and beauty which they aspire to in their inward lives. They know that the nation would be the poorer also. Democracy which has achieved on this continent its longest-lived and fullest embodiment can scarcely afford to admit that it is condemned by some law of logic to bareness in the public scene and boredom in the life of its citizens. Quite the contrary. Democracy, if it is to achieve its promise, must excel in all fields. And, in fact, there is no reason why it cannot do so.

In the arts, as I argued earlier, we have made progress of a limited kind. We can draw for helpful precedents upon techniques worked out in such areas as science. We can look to the ways we have found through matching grants to help local libraries and educational TV—both involving cultural implications and both accomplished without either undue strain on the federal budget or threats to the freedom of creative individuals. The states, furthermore, are becoming active in the arts. Traditionally laboratories of experiment, the states may once again indicate a variety of means open to the federal government. New York State's Arts Council suggests much, for example, not only to other states but to those who are working on the details of national policy.

By whatever means, the need for innovation and action in the field of the arts seems one which administrators and legislators are bound to recognize increasingly. It is simply not conceivable that the richest nation in the world should show itself penurious or obscurantist when confronted by the challenge of contemporary society. Aesthetic considerations aside for the moment, the problems put to us by a highly advanced technological society make it essential to turn in this direction. We know that in the long run we shall have to find viable job opportunities outside the areas where automation holds sway: the arts provide a vast and largely untapped resource. We know that increasing free time during the productive years and prolonged periods of retirement at the end of the life cycle threaten society with mass boredom or cheap degradation. The arts, again, provide a way out.

They provide as well a heady, stimulating enterprise for a society which seeks constantly for new frontiers. Could anything be more tempting than the opportunity to rebuild—with a fresh attention to sheer beauty—the centers of our greatest cities? For a society that does not seek imperial glories but has not lost the taste for adventure, this should be able to match the lure of space exploration. Indeed I shall hazard a prediction. Here in Washington you will see the great Pennsylvania Avenue project undertaken and completed. You will see this not because it is a necessity but for the very fact that it is a luxury. You will see it because President Johnson has dared to dream about more beautiful American cities and a greater American society. Is there any boast a proud man could more fittingly desire to make than that he found the historic heart of Washington an ignoble confusion, and that he left it a place of rational delight?

There is another reason why I believe you will see the Pennsylvania Avenue project come to pass. It is because good design is a contagious, and can become an imperious, cause. You may start in the smallest way—with a well-designed postage stamp, or with something so modest and necessarily ephemeral as the handsome poster which has been designed by the Department of Agriculture for this series of discussions. You will not end there. Once the value of good design has been grasped, men will grow hungry for it. They will not

want to cease until the greatest as well as the smallest things—our cities and regions as well as our postage stamps—have been shaped in such a way as to be a little nearer to what the eye recognizes as good.



This interest of the government would not be fruitful if the arts themselves were not in a sound condition. Government cannot by itself create culture. Its role, as President Kennedy used to like to say, should at its best be "marginal." Men of genius appear in their own time, expressing themselves in their own way—through some process we know little of. Perhaps it is the culmination of events and causes deep within the social order; but certainly genius is not summoned at the will of government. What shall we say, then, of the condition of the arts in the United States today?

There are at least three views. Some hold we are basically uninterested in cultural experiences—a Philistine people bent on material gain. Others admit we are busy enough with the arts, but claim that for most of us they are merely a sign of social status, a fashion induced by the taste-makers and destined, like other fashions, to alter or pass. Finally there are those who claim that we are in the midst of the greatest intellectual and cultural flowering since the sixteenth century.

I do not subscribe to any one of these views precisely. If I were to make a generalization of my own, I would put it in this way: We are rich in individual genius, but we are poor, sometimes desperately poor, in the institutions and organizations through which individual genius is nourished and sustained. No one could ask today—as a famous Englishman asked tauntingly a century ago—"Who reads an American book?" Who, for that matter, looks at an American picture? Or examines attentively an American building? The answer is that the whole world does. A comparatively small number of men and women in literature, in the visual arts, in architecture, music, drama and the dance have given to the United States a place within the civilized world comparable to that held by Western Europe for long generations. But meanwhile, as I said, we are poor in institutions. I need only cite a single fact: today four hundred-odd American singers are

singing in opera companies abroad—for the reason that we do not have on these shores the opera companies which can give them scope for their skills and talents.

Much has been made of the fact that the number of symphony orchestras and acting groups has increased enormously over the past two decades. This is encouraging, of course. But what is not usually noted is that this increase has taken place wholly in the amateur sector. The professional stage in America has been declining in the number of Broadway plays, stock companies, traveling groups. Even off-Broadway theater, which seemed for a while to offer hope for a new copiousness and variety, is now running into the same difficulties which have reduced the commercial theater to a vanishing industry.

To enlarge the number of repertory theaters has seemed a valid objective of our cultural life. But how difficult this is, and how easily is the young plant chilled! I am afraid that many of us have tended to minimize the hazards which lie in the way of a fledgling institution. The troubles through which the repertory theater of Lincoln Center is now passing should remind us that even under the best possible conditions—generous financing, a large pool of actors, the availability of works by our foremost playwrights, skilled professional direction and, not least, a handsome and appropriate hall—a new company is hard to establish. In the light of this, the expectations of creating new repertory companies to fill the cultural centers being planned or built across the land must seem almost visionary.

Money helps, of course. We are just beginning to accept the fact that the arts, like education, cannot be expected to pay for themselves. Box office receipts are vital; but insofar as the cultural institution fulfills its varied and basic responsibilities it will need outside help on a continuing basis. The theater cannot content itself with providing entertainment alone—any more than a university can, or a museum or orchestra. The repertory theater meeting its responsibility to the community must, in addition to being alive and interesting, provide a training ground for actors and playwrights. It must innovate, even where innovation is not immediately popular. It must reach out to the younger audiences who cannot pay the full ticket price and may well



need special performances. Finally, it must preserve and constantly recreate the cultural heritage which comes down to us in the form of classic or forgotten works. The sources of funds which can help fill the gap between what a theater or orchestra takes in at the box office and the cost of its diverse services are multiple. These sources, moreover, are waking to their responsibilities in the cultural field. Foundations, corporations, local governmental agencies and the ever-faithful private giver are beginning at last to look the facts in the face and to tally up the cost of a vigorous, varied cultural life.

Where does the federal government fit into this picture? Insofar as the need is for support of organizations and institutions, the government's task is made the easier. Government can deal more naturally with groups than with individuals, with institutions than with the raw material of creative energy. Insofar as money is the need, government is again favored. For money, quite often, is the one saving ingredient which government can provide. (It cannot, certainly, provide artistic genius or literary creativity!) How to provide the money, in what forms to make grants and to what organizations—these of course raise difficult questions. But they are questions not essentially different from those which the processes of government have effectively answered in analogous fields.

What the results of the money will be is problematical also. One thing we can be sure of is that government's aid to the arts will not invariably be successful. Public agencies must be ready for disappointments and frustrations. They must expect the public to criticize it for letting the artists themselves have too free a hand. The separation of politics from governmental programs in the arts, and at the same time maintaining high standards, raises delicate questions. But these things are not impossible; and the rewards of surmounting the problems may be very high in terms of a democracy that lives up to the hopes of its true friends.



Government's role in the arts is rendered possible by the fact that talent and creative imagination abound among us. I would now like to point out that this role is made treacherous by the revolutionary character of

much contemporary art. In the theater, in literature, in the visual arts and architecture, the old standards have not only been discarded but new forms and techniques are evolving season by season. It is a comparatively straightforward task for governments in a settled period to lend support to established artists and traditional art forms. The task is confused when everything is in flux and when violent public emotions quite often accompany each adoption of a new style or each abandonment of an old.

It might have been supposed that the coming of abstract art would solve a lot of difficulties in this field. For while it is easy to grow excited if someone paints a man with a wrong kind of hat, it would seem more difficult to do so if both man and hat have vanished into an undecipherable blur. The trouble is, people get even more excited about seeing the blur which they cannot understand than they did about seeing the heresy which they understood all too well. As a member of the New York City Art Commission I have known at first hand the perplexities created by the submission of novel forms of sculpture or painting—perplexities both within the Commission and among the public.

What has happened in all the arts is the dissolution of accepted standards and the opening up of a wide choice as to forms, means, and objectives. It was once taken for granted that the artist would paint what society, or what the church, expected of him. Within the limits thus set down he could experiment and innovate, but the chief conditions of his work were prescribed for him. Today he must invent his own subject matter and very often his own tools and techniques. The poets seem to feel they must actually invent a new language. Thus a burden has been laid upon the artist: no longer is he the adorer merely, the individual who makes more fitting or beautiful the scenes and objects of life around him. He has become the prophet. He is in the front rank of those individuals who ultimately decide within a society the values that will prevail and the perspectives that will rule. It is a dangerous burden. For it is difficult—sometimes perilously difficult—to know the false prophets from the true.

Combined with this burden of prophecy is another factor: the rhythm of change and innovation which seems to be inherent in an

advanced technological society. In art we reject and accept styles almost as rapidly as we do in consumer goods. Only a society in an extraordinary degree of ferment could have made abstract expressionism in painting already seem "old hat"; while last year's Pop Art has already given way to this year's Op Art. The effect of these changes and reversals upon individual artists can easily be imagined. Some are left high and dry before they have had a chance to reveal their full gifts. Others try to go frantically along with the tide and never mature. The spirit of innovation can give brilliance to an age; but innovation constantly accelerated and lacking in direction must inevitably cause deep disturbances within the community of creative men.

My concern at the moment is not, however, with the difficulties that confront the artist. It is with those confronting government when it endeavors to intervene and to lend its support to the cultural life. It finds itself in the role of a physician who is asked to make cures when he has lost a clear sense of the difference between health and lack of health. It confronts the danger of clinging to the old, stale, supporting orthodoxies and artists that speak for nothing significant in their generation. Or it faces the opposite danger of furthering an art which is the production of a clique. Then it will appear to be very up-to-date, but it will in fact be helping to widen the gulf between the average citizen and the fashionable elite.



Our aim must be to insulate political pressures from the judgments which the wisest professionals make; our expectation must be that political leaders will refrain from the temptation to appear shocked or horrified at what they do not understand or personally do not happen to like. Such goals are not unattainable. I have the impression that the Congressional outcries which a year ago greeted the performance of Martha Graham's dance troupe under government auspices were

a dying note. Nobody took them very seriously. (It was indeed hard to do so when the critics and the public abroad hailed these same dance performances as one of the purest expressions of American genius.) We have come a way since the New Deal days when the Federal Theater Project was under constant attack in political circles. President Eisenhower, himself no lover of modern art, could set a healthy precedent in declaring that the exhibition at the Moscow Fair had been chosen by experts and that he would not interfere with their judgment.

To give up because the nature of contemporary art is obscure and often tantalizing would be to betray the essence of our times. We live in an age which opens to men and women as never before the opportunity to share in the delights of the spirit which once were open to the very few. Under the pressures of the day we belittle the age—seeing its perils or shortcomings, but forgetting the new scope which it offers to man. The enjoyment of leisure, the stimulation of travel, the wide availability of good books, good music, good painting, all await the citizens. Around us are the signs of a new level of taste. The heaviness and darkness of a former epoch are gone. The way people dress, the way they furnish their houses, the consumer goods they purchase and the houses they live in, suggest a feeling for fitness, lightness, even a kind of gaiety. The simplest objects are freshly viewed. The tomato soup can has been put in the museum, and none of us will ever look at the tomato soup can in quite the same way again. We begin to realize—what the best of ages have always known—that the spirit of art must penetrate all aspects of life.

It is to such an age, to such an atmosphere, that government must adapt itself. It is not the instrument of men of a past age, but of the living generation with its ardors and excitements, its thirst for a more varied and interesting life. The Great Society is one where there shall be peace and plenty. It is also a society where a desire for beauty and a love of harmony are manifest in all its works.



GRAPHIC DESIGNER IVAN CHERMAYEFF HAS BEEN AWARDED FOR HIS WORK BY THE ART DIRECTORS CLUB OF NEW YORK, THE TYPE DIRECTORS CLUB, AND THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF GRAPHIC ARTS, OF WHICH HE WAS PRESIDENT IN 1963-64. AMONG HIS MORE NOTABLE ASSIGNMENTS WERE HIS MASTER PLANS FOR THE USE OF GRAPHICS—IN ADVERTISING, SIGNS, LETTERHEADS, COMPANY INTERIORS—BY IBM AND CHASE MANHATTAN BANK OF NEW YORK.





# THE GRAPHIC ARTS

ADDRESS BY IVAN CHERMAYEFF, NOVEMBER 25, 1964



THE CHASE MANHATTAN BANK



## THE GRAPHIC ARTS

The term "graphic arts" implies a world of activity with which a graphic designer is not primarily or, more correctly, should not be, concerned. "Graphic arts" suggests an involvement with the making of "pretty" pictures, "sensitive" images, and "interesting" arrangements. The word "art" implies a basic orientation which is personal rather than public, and private rather than communicative.

We are concerned with design. Let us call it "graphic design" or "visual communications." Whatever terminology is used, the purpose is to solve problems. But these problems are not the problems of the graphic designer. They are the problems of the client. The designer solves them by understanding them and working with ideas that will communicate. Unfortunately, the client—whether he be an individual, a corporation, or a government—is often enough incapable of adequately defining his own problems. He is often unsure of what he is trying to say, to whom he should be saying it, and when it should be said.

The designer has a responsibility to help define the problems which he must then later solve.

He is not someone who expounds some particular point of view or style. He is a borrower, coordinator, assimilator, and juggler. He is a collector of material, knowledge, and thought from past and present—from other designers, from technology, and from himself.

His style and individuality come from the consistency of his own attitude and approach to the expression and communication of a problem. It is the devotion of the designer to

the task of fully understanding the problem, and then expressing those ideas which come from this search, in their appropriate form, that make him a useful professional.

Graphic design as a profession is only just coming into existence, but relatively few of those who most need its services have yet understood its meaning or value, and so it is still thought of as the "graphic arts." As a result postage stamp commissions are given to printmakers, and posters to painters. On the other hand, signing systems are often enough left to sign contractors; a host of visual communications problems which should be coordinated, simplified, organized, and generally made to work efficiently and intelligently, are not left in any special hands—whether competent or incompetent—either of designers or artists, but left to take place piecemeal. The pressure for doing something arises and whoever is closest to the boiling pot turns off the gas, disregarding or ignoring the fact that a good many of the enormous problems of communication are very much related to one another.

If the medical profession were given the same lack of attention as the design profession, many of the great programs of the federal government would not have come about. It is very much the same thing in health, education, and welfare as it is in visual communications—without the medical profession, one would die sooner, and without the design profession, how long could our spirits survive?

Our visual environment is becoming more and more confused and unpleasant. We are all deluged with printed material, our vision is blocked by billboards, the trees obliterated,



our ears are made insensitive by the cacophony of television, radio, vacuum cleaners, air conditioners, the automobile, and all that goes with them.

There are so many signs in our cities and on our highways, so many magazines, so much advertising and promotion that it becomes increasingly difficult to find the important and the essential information that we require.

Excellence in graphic communication is basic to our future. There is no question that better and better work is being done every day. Standards are continually being raised in every graphic area, but the best that is being done at the top is not raising the standards at the bottom. The bottom is growing faster still and if we think that the quality of the best will eventually filter down to improve the more mundane daily activities of graphic design, we are very much mistaken. We will not be able to fill the gap because the time lag between expedient and out-dated work and a clearer understanding of fundamental issues, basic goals, and purposes is too great.

Graphic design is concerned with organizing and arranging information so that it can be easily seen, read and understood, and in a form appropriate to its function. Manuals of instruction, reports, directional signing, posters, booklets, stationery, forms, exhibitions, displays, packages, labels, tapes, building identification, film, filmstrips, papers, news releases—all obviously have their own particular specifications and requirements.

Some must be produced cheaply, others quickly, some are for a captive audience, others are to captivate an audience, some to establish interest, others to inform rapidly. Regardless of any inherent restrictions, no graphic problem need be conceived or executed arbitrarily, without an awareness of its relationship to other material.

Graphic design has many purposes, but perhaps the most important is to create a sense of order out of a condition which, without coordination, is, inevitably, chaos.

In any corporation or institution, a lack of an overriding philosophy of order, consistency, and appropriateness in relation to graphic design problems is immediately apparent. The graphic material is not designed as part of a total program or, in many instances, even designed at all, but merely has happened.

The larger the institution, the more apparent is the disorder. One finds the name of the institution presented in far too many different forms. Color, trademarks, paper, typographic styles, sizes—all are unrelated, from one printed piece to another. Some are incompetent, some may be excellent, but these only in themselves, isolated from any overall approach which, under such circumstances, cannot exist. Everyone is responsible for the bits and pieces—printers, copy writers, office boys, the president of the institution, secretaries—yet no one is responsible for the whole, and chaos prevails. All the disorder is costly; as forms duplicate other forms, communications to those outside the institution vary in direction, content, and visual continuity. What should be design decisions are made by people who are unfamiliar or uninvolved with design. Their time is wasted, and inevitably a great deal of effort is spent, effort out of all proportion to the accomplishments. A further loss, beyond the failure of effective communication, is the sense of pride belonging to any organization which has its own house in order.

Good design is good business. It costs no more than bad design, and that is saying no design at all.

However, the well-conceived and ordered result can be achieved only through the understanding and cooperation of both the client and the designer. The client must know the purpose and content of his message, and care enough about its execution to communicate them to the designer, whose skills can then be applied.

The federal government in all its departments has an obligation to encourage and foster the best visual communications possible, both for itself and as an example to others. When it is concerned enough, as it has proven itself to be in many instances, then competent professionals are hired and laudable results are achieved.

Design outside the federal government is often success-oriented rather than quality-oriented. Most companies seem to care very little about doing a good job for the inherent pleasure of doing one's best. Fortunately a great many corporations and institutions, some of them influential, want their advertisements, products, and printed material to look good, to do their job, and earn the right to be a part of society and its artifacts. There are a

few who do this not only because good design is good business, but because doing one's best is a way of life.

A concern for quality in graphic design, as well as everything else, is essential if the long-term view is to be taken. The federal

government, by definition, must look ahead. It must also look backwards and down into the many areas which have remained unchanged in a changing world and are in need of a concern for quality. Quality of intention, quality of performance, quality of achievement.

ELIOT NOYES, DESIGN DIRECTOR FOR NORMAN BEL  
GEDDES IN THE MID-1940'S, HAS MAINTAINED HIS  
OWN PRACTICE AS AN ARCHITECT AND INDUSTRIAL  
DESIGNER SINCE 1948. HE IS ALSO CONSULTANT  
DIRECTOR OF DESIGN FOR IBM AND WESTING-  
HOUSE. MR. NOYES, AN AIA FELLOW AND A MEMBER  
OF THE SOCIETY OF INDUSTRIAL DESIGNERS, HAS  
RECEIVED THE TOP ANNUAL AWARD OF THE AMER-  
ICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS AND THE HOMES  
FOR BETTER LIVING AWARD.





# INDUSTRIAL DESIGN

ADDRESS BY ELIOT NOYES, DECEMBER 3, 1964



## INDUSTRIAL DESIGN

"Design in the Federal Government" is rather a big round topic and I see that it has been carved into three pieces of pie here. Graphics and architecture are perhaps easier to define and circumscribe than industrial design, a term which, I think, is vague and imprecise to many people, perhaps to most people. It may have been clearer back in the 20's and 30's when a rather small group of men decided that if they went to work on manufactured products from a conscious point of view of design, they could improve the usefulness, the appearance, and the sales of those products. There had always been designers, of course, but from those days on, this country had a new kind of professional design activity with the name "industrial design." Also, starting then, I think there have been in this activity two major tendencies of which you are all probably aware. One of them is the tendency to use design only as a device to promote sales, more like advertising; this has resulted in the development of superficial and even irresponsible attitudes, leading to design clichés, annual model changes, phony streamlining, the kind of thing that, in the name of industrial design, has really done an awful lot of harm.

On the other hand, the increased attention to design as a profession has really produced a profession. There are a great many conscientious designers working hard and carefully at trying to link professional design standards with solutions for human needs and engineering and marketing realities. I am much more interested in the latter group. But the present picture of design is pretty confused. It is a long time since the 20's and the 30's, and what has happened in the mean-

time is interesting. Designers of products are mostly found now, I think, inside companies, designing whatever that company produces. That is, somebody spends his life designing furniture or china or something like that. But the outside designers, the independent ones, have very much less to do with product design than they used to, and they are all over the lot. They are doing graphics, packaging, trade shows, store layout, city planning, management consulting, product planning, product engineering, and you begin to wonder if there is a profession there at all. I think there is, but under the name of industrial design these days you can find a pretty wild range of activity. It doesn't help any—and I'm sure this is true in the relation of the design world to the government—that there have been, and still are for the moment at least, two societies of design—ASID and IDI, with occasionally divergent attitudes. Happily, they are in the process of becoming one society, and that should simplify things; along with that process of consolidation, a soul-searching as to the meaning of the activity is also taking place.

For me, industrial design, strictly speaking, is chiefly an involvement in what has been called "the imaginative development of useful products," and all those peripheral activities can take place too, but industrial design must, I think, be mostly involved with products. Now there isn't a lot of that kind of activity in the government and we are talking about this in relation to the federal government if we can. But under the control of the federal government a lot of design in general does go on, so perhaps we have a link here after all.

I don't intend to talk just about industrial



design. I'd like to talk about design quite broadly. I saw myself listed in the morning Post as an industrial designer but, honestly, that's not the whole truth. I am first of all an architect. I was trained as an architect. I am a member of AIA. I design houses, office buildings, banks, laboratories, schools, and all the usual kinds of buildings that architects do design, and I have an architectural staff in my office. But also, I am indeed an industrial designer. I design computers, typewriters, dictating machines, diesel engines, and all sorts of things that industrial designers design—real products. I even slip off and design trade shows and get into graphics myself, too, though when I really want to get into graphics, I get Paul Rand or Ivan Chermayeff to work with me.

Now out of these two activities comes a sort of a third one in which I am also very much involved, and that is consultant to corporations, mostly IBM and Westinghouse, with some smaller ones. In this role, I provide a kind of design guidance in all areas in which the corporations produce anything you can look at—from products to graphics to architecture. And in that same role I very much insist that they give me buildings to design and products to work on, because I really like to be an architect and a designer better than a consultant.

Now, it seems to me that the problems of design that a corporation faces have obvious parallels in those which the federal government faces. Both are large, rather unwieldy, and decentralized, with many agencies or divisions. I am told that there are seventy-five government agencies, while Westinghouse has about sixty divisions; to these agencies and divisions are delegated large areas of responsibility which may include design. For all of these agencies and divisions, and for the companies and the government as a whole, design is a major form of expression. So I would like to approach design in the federal government today by talking mostly about design for corporations, and we can then look for parallels.

I have been involved in corporate design problems for quite a while. I've really been working for IBM one way or another since 1947, but for nine years now I have been Consultant Director of Design for IBM, and for four years, the same thing for Westinghouse too. Corporations like these are involved in

design in two main ways. One is in the products which they manufacture; the other is, of course, the way they look as companies—their buildings, their lobbies, their offices, the graphics they put out, their show windows, their displays, all that. It would be ideal if a common point of view could quite naturally find expression in the design of products and company appearance. But the world of design is a puzzling one to corporations. This is fairly understandable, I think. We have come to a moment when design is in somewhat of a mess. It wasn't always this way. If you take some period such as the 18th century in England, for example, you find that a common point of view, very widely shared by society, somehow resulted in a single attitude in the work of design for architects, silversmiths, furniture makers, and everybody else. Thus, out of a wide variety of people working in different fields automatically came a unified design statement. It wasn't done by anybody cracking a whip—it just happened. We haven't got that today. If I say **design** today, it's very important to define immediately just what I am talking about. For example, in architecture, do I mean the Seagram Building or the Huntington Hartford Museum? In design, do I mean design as in furniture by Mies van der Rohe or in motorboats with tailfins? In a sense they are all design, but the scattered attitudes shown there are evidence, I think, that we are in a period of great design confusion. Evidence of this confusion also lies in the fact that a great many conferences are being held on this subject. There was one recently in New York called "Who Is Responsible for Ugliness," and indeed we devoted the entire Aspen conference last June to a scrutiny of our directions and dilemmas in design. But we are, of course, different from the 18th century. We couldn't really expect it to be as easy as that, or as easy as that looks. We are quite different socially and have new ways of thinking about things. We operate at quite a different scale with a whole new technology and there is every reason in the world for us to look different and new. One of the great facts of this century is the existence of the big corporation, and the big corporation is bound to be a major source of design for our century. If we are going to leave anything useful or important behind as a country or as a society, a large part of it must come

from the big corporations. They are the source of it, and so indeed is the federal government. So I think that the success of a big corporation (or the government) in integrating a consistent point of view about design into the normal daily business of business has great importance beyond the immediate commercial good it's likely to do the company. It's got a cultural and social significance that can't be overlooked. All this, of course, only makes sense if good design is good business, and IBM has for some time now very strongly supported this thesis and gone a long way toward proving the point. Westinghouse is twice as big and much more complicated, but is dedicated to the same point of view, and already shows tremendous results.

Now, let's clarify one point of possible confusion. You are very familiar, I am sure, with the term **image** and **corporate image**. You probably pick up the paper as I do and see that the XYZ Company has just hired the ABC firm to design a corporate image for it—this goes on every day. Well, I'm not in the image business. I don't believe in corporate images. This image game is very superficial, using design as a sort of slipcover, and I think that the practitioners do the world of design great damage in making it such a shallow game. But I do believe in corporate character and that design programs can identify and express that character. If you play it straight, the first problems for the designer, given a company to work with, is to find out what the corporate character really is. In my experience, the designer has to identify this for himself. But it's strange that a company cannot generally express clearly what it really consists of, what its own essence is. In part, it is because the people running the company are so involved in the daily business of business that they do not stop to look for **meanings**. For this reason, the designer must bring a kind of outside vision to the situation. He must try to identify the company character in terms of the company's highest ideals and most meaningful goals, and he must view it in the broadest context of our society and the economy. I think he must also be alert, not just to what the company is, but to what it would like to be, where it would like to go. So that there is a forward-looking ingredient here too. It is terribly easy to look at a company in too small terms, and this generally

is what goes on inside. For example, it's easy to say that IBM is simply a maker of business machines. But if you get to the very heart of the matter, what IBM really does is to help man extend his control over his environment. Now you can work your way back from that, but I think that's the meaning of the company.

Similarly, Westinghouse is easy to think of as a maker of household appliances—indeed that's exactly what I thought they were when I started to work for them. Well, only a quarter of their business is just that, making appliances, but three quarters of it is in vastly more important and exciting areas—the development and distribution of power—and it is in a multiplicity of projects at the outer edges of scientific knowledge. What they are doing has implications for the safety of the country, possibly even the survival of the planet. So if you start looking at Westinghouse in those terms instead of just as a maker of household products, you get a quite different notion about how it ought to look.

I find that the identification of a company through design eyes has another very interesting effect. It often helps illuminate the nature of the company to itself and stimulates new and fresh kinds of thought and action on its own part. For design is a means by which you look at yourself as well as a means by which you express yourself to others.

In undertaking a design program for such companies, the designer, having identified the character of the company, must try to develop a consistency between the corporate character and the corporate appearance. You might think this would happen automatically, but it doesn't, and it's really quite hard to achieve. People, after all, express themselves quite normally and automatically, so why shouldn't corporations? The reason is really found in the ways that corporations and people are different. If you meet somebody, within a moment you are starting to get clues about him—the way he looks, the clothes he's wearing, what he says, the car he's driving, the girl he has with him, all sorts of clues. But a corporation isn't like that, for two reasons. One is that it is impersonal, and the other is that it is multi-personal, and there is a trap in each. Being impersonal, it just doesn't have these personal aspects. Being multi-personal, it has a lot of important people in a lot of important positions, all of whom may have a tendency to express



themselves rather than the company itself. In all innocence, companies can fall into this trap, and IBM is no exception. Some of you may remember the showroom at the corner of 57th Street and Madison Avenue in New York. About fifteen years ago, it was the main company showroom. There were about thirty kinds of marble on the floor and about forty Persian carpets on that, and then brass stanchions and red plush ropes. The walls were oak paneled, the ceiling was coffered and painted. On these Persian carpets were black business machines with cast iron Queen Anne legs. To look into this show window from Madison Avenue and try to guess what the company was like, well, it was design schizophrenia of the worst sort. It not only gave you no true insight into the nature of the company, it gave you misleading notions, false clues.

So some kind of conscious control seems to be needed for design in companies. It has to be based on a continuing and consistent design point of view. Control can happen inside a company without outside help, and I think the Olivetti Company is a fine example of that. It began, of course, with Adriano Olivetti, who already knew the world of design and his own business and put them together. He really called for and got a very tightly controlled design program, as I am sure you are all aware. It can happen in this country, too. The Cummins Engine Company under Irwin Miller's direction seems to move with firm and knowledgeable control in design matters. But big companies like IBM and Westinghouse don't develop people like this naturally and business schools don't train people in this area. Yet companies do have problems of design and the need for effective solutions. So what seems to be needed is a kind of curator of corporate character, and at present he is often found outside the company. Also, an outside curator brings an outside vision, more objectivity, and often more experience than can be found inside. That's really why I find myself in this relation to the companies that I am working for.

If the company character has been generally identified, the next question is, how should it look to express this character? For example, how should IBM look? Now IBM operates in a very special world of advanced technology, and one immediate idea is that it should look both advanced and technical.

It is clearly a modern company, and anything old-fashioned about it would obviously be wrong. It is also concerned with human values and social values, and one would expect some expression of this attitude in design. A large part of the consultant's job from there on lies in finding the strong designers, architects, graphics people, and others who can help in creating this appropriate design expression geared to the true nature of the company.

A program like this in any company requires very broad understanding and unwavering support by the top of the company. I have found that if you haven't got this, you will get chopped to pieces at the lower levels very fast. It is hard enough, even with a good deal of support at the top. I have occasionally likened myself to the boy scout who came home to his mother at lunch, and she said, "Have you done your good deed today?" He said, "I sure have. Two other guys and I helped an old lady across the street." "Yes," she said, "why did it take three of you to do that?" "Well," he said, "she didn't want to cross the street." This is often the way I feel about both IBM and Westinghouse. But I do have a couple of other guys. One of them is Paul Rand, who took on the graphics assignment in both these cases and has done a terrific job. The other is Charles Eames, whose work and general relationship to both programs has been of great importance both to me and to the companies.

Now I'm going to show you a lot of slides rather fast, primarily about these two programs, but before I do I'd like to explore for a moment that parallel between the corporation and the federal government. I think some of the similarities will have made themselves clear, but I did say that you had to identify the corporate character before you can really go to work on a program of this sort. If design in the federal government is going to be consistent and meaningful and effective, I think it is important to know what you are expressing there too. But if you can identify broadly this character, its ideals and its goals, it seems to me that there is a broad world of design in which this expression can come out. That fine Stuart Davis postage stamp that I saw in the paper this morning is a good example. But the parkways and Pennsylvania Avenue, post offices and mailboxes, airports, embassies and trade fairs and new buildings, and all similar things



constantly coming out are each one of them an opportunity for a statement. And a statement now must be based on our agreement or definition of what we're trying to be, what we'd like the government to be, what we'd like ourselves to be. Here's a definition that Adlai Stevenson made recently. I like it. "America, today, I submit, is a land in the restless throes of adjustment to a sudden new role in world leadership; to the thundering

impact of new technology upon traditional ways and to the disruptive pace of urbanization—a society painfully aware of its new problems and straining hard to do something about them—a nation bursting with energy and throbbing with creativity and a people brimming with faith in their own capacity to carry our burdens abroad and also to build a just, humane and better society here at home."

It would be great if we looked like that.

FRANCIS D. LETHBRIDGE, PARTNER IN THE ARCHITECTURAL FIRM OF KEYES, LETHBRIDGE & CONDON, IS A MEMBER OF THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS, THE WASHINGTON BUILDING CONGRESS, THE NATIONAL TRUST FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION, AND THE SOCIETY OF ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIANS. HE IS CURRENTLY CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE ON LANDMARKS FOR THE NATIONAL CAPITAL. HIS MORE NOTABLE WORKS INCLUDE THE CARDEROCK SPRINGS COMMUNITY IN MARYLAND, THE FOREST INDUSTRIES BUILDING AND THE TIBER ISLAND DEVELOPMENT IN WASHINGTON, D. C., AND THE U.S. EMBASSY IN LIMA, PERU.



# **ARCHITECTURE AND THE FEDERAL CITY**

ADDRESS BY FRANCIS D. LETHBRIDGE, DECEMBER 10, 1964







## ARCHITECTURE AND THE FEDERAL CITY

Architectural design for the federal government did not begin under very auspicious circumstances. Let me relate to you George Hadfield's description of that occasion, written about the year 1820. Mr. Hadfield was a very talented architect, the designer of Washington's beautiful old City Hall, as well as the Custis-Lee Mansion in Arlington Memorial Cemetery, but it is only fair to add that he was also a disillusioned ex-architect of the Capitol. Mr. Hadfield wrote:

"A premium was offered in the year 1791 through the American newspapers, of five hundred dollars, and a building lot in the city of Washington, for the best design of the Capitol. This premium was offered at a period when scarcely a professional architect was to be found in any of the United States, which is plainly to be seen from the pile of trash presented as designs for said building."

(At this point I should like to pause to say that this earliest of all examples illustrates one cardinal rule to be impressed upon all architects who are bold enough to brave the perils of federal architecture: **Open competitions are a very uncertain thing.** Let us go on, however, with Mr. Hadfield's comments.)

"One of the designs, however, obtained the premium, but on some person or persons having represented to General Washington unfavorable reports of the plan of said design, and that one of another was more suited for the purpose, General Washington asked whether the latter plan could not be adapted to the elevation, or outside part, of the former design. They answered General Washington in the affirmative, and probably without mentioning to him the future consequences that must

inevitably follow, by expecting a public building from a jumble of two designs, which were as different from each other as day is from night."

(Now this second paragraph illustrates two truths. First, **if you are designing a building for the federal government, you had better have some good friends at court**, and second, **with friends like these you have no need for enemies.**)

Hadfield continues with this statement, "It is surprising that some of the advisers of General Washington on this subject, who, one would suppose, were men well acquainted with the manner that great works of this kind are executed in Europe, did not advise the only method by which the success of the building, in all its stages, might have been ensured; which was, by offering an adequate sum to the most eminent architect in any of the great cities of Europe."

(Here we have first-hand evidence of still another immutable law: **An expert is an architect from out of town.**)

Hadfield concludes, "Under such a system the whole of the Capitol would have been long ago completed for half the sum that has been expended on the present wreck."

To which the editor has added, "The death of Mr. Hadfield in February 1826 prevented the appearance of farther (sic) remarks from him on other parts of the Capitol."<sup>1</sup> I wonder! Doubtless he would have unburdened himself of many more during the next one hundred and forty years of inspired improvisation that created the building as it stands today.

<sup>1</sup> Elliot, S. A. The Washington Guide . . . 2nd edition. City of Washington, 1826. pp. 15-24.

36

If the study of history leads one to believe that the execution of federal architecture has always been complex and contradictory, we must acknowledge that today it is a subject vastly more complicated than ever before, simply by reason of its greatly increased dimensions and influence, both direct and indirect. I do not propose to discuss the problems of federal architectural design standards, for example, in the course of a talk as brief as this must be, nor the unanswered questions of the role the federal government might play in the field of architectural research and experimentation. For the moment, I intend to ignore the impact—*aesthetic or social*—of federally financed, inspired, or insured construction in communities throughout the United States. Instead, I would like to talk principally about the design of buildings, places and monuments in the National Capital, and of the responsibilities of the federal government in the planning of its own home. For it follows that if the relationship of the government to architectural design is to be a healthy and vital one, then necessarily it must spring from a source that is strong and sound; contrary-wise, if the influence of the federal government is a blight upon architecture, it must spread from a rotten trunk to the very ends of its limbs.

Architecture in the Federal City has passed through four fairly distinct phases. The first period, characterized by the Georgian domestic scale of work by men like William Thornton and James Hoban, and the bolder classic revival designs of Benjamin Latrobe, George Hadfield, Charles Bulfinch and Robert Mills, extended to the middle of the 19th century, a period of about sixty years. Ammi Young and Thomas U. Walter were probably the last active architects in the service of the government to carry out work in this style.

The tragic figure of that era, whose work was completed before the City of Washington even began to build, was, of course, Pierre Charles L'Enfant, whose great plan for the capital spread over the city in a fabric of monumental design, and was gradually torn and mutilated as the city grew to fill out its form. A few minor examples of architecture in the gothic revival style were constructed during the first half century; but these were principally chapels, not government buildings, and they were in the relatively chaste tradition of English parish churches rather than the more ornate styles that followed.

The second period, the romantic revival, had its beginnings under the influence of Andrew Jackson Downing, the famous landscape architect; the architect Richard Upjohn; and James Renwick, whose gothic design for the Smithsonian Institution was the first major building to be placed on the site of the Mall. In the post-Civil War period the Army Engineers exerted a strong influence, not only in buildings like the Soldier's Home, designed by B. S. Alexander, and the Pension Building, by Montgomery Meigs, but in the execution of other architecture, notably the old State, War and Navy Building by Alfred B. Mullett and the Library of Congress, designed by the Washington, D. C., firm of Smithmeyer and Pelz. It was a period of wild eclecticism which reached its peak, or bottom, depending on your sense of humor, in the Museum of Science and Industries by Cluss and Schulze, a building straight out of the Arabian Nights in a bad translation from the German. Its last very substantial gasp was the old Post Office on Pennsylvania Avenue which was obsolete before the day it was finished, and which has defied destruction ever since. It still stands, a fortress that was never taken, even during the onslaught of the strongest forces of the next period—which was, of course, the period of the McMillan Plan, the City Beautiful, that Roman holiday that revived, enlarged, and greatly elaborated the L'Enfant Plan. The McMillan Plan decreed that henceforth all federal architecture should be based upon classic precedents. Also, what is now more generally forgotten, it laid the foundations of Washington's great park system, an accomplishment that was not the least that resulted from the labors and enthusiasms of Daniel Burnham, Charles McKim, Augustus Saint-Gaudens and Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. The effective work of the Park Commission was in large measure due to the unrelenting efforts of men like Charles Moore and Glenn Brown, who carried on the crusade for the Park Commission's plan over a period of more than twenty years, and to the support, at its most critical period, of powerful men in the government such as Secretary Elihu Root, Secretary of War and State, and Senator James McMillan, Chairman of the Committee on the District of Columbia. The great advances in physical planning during this period may overshadow its architectural monuments, and with the removal of acres of temporary office buildings from the Mall, we are only now awakening to the fact that we



must carry out, in a manner suitable today, the work that they started in 1901.

It was never stated categorically in the Park Commission's report that a federal architecture based upon classic traditions was thereafter to be the order of the day, but it was persuasively argued by McKim, Burnham, and their associates. They were fresh from the triumphs and acclaim that greeted the Columbian Exposition of 1893, which had opened the eyes of all who had seen it to the truth that in planning the City Beautiful the whole is far greater than the sum of its parts. Saint-Gaudens wrote of the fair, "The days I passed there linger in the memory like a glorious dream, and it seems impossible that such a vision can ever be recalled in its poetic grandeur and elevation."<sup>2</sup> This group of artists, closely knit together by mutual respect and affection, spent six weeks traveling in Europe, refreshing their minds with the great glories of the past of urban design before they were prepared to begin the task of the revival of a comprehensive design for the federal capital. Is it any wonder that their vision of a Washington transformed carried all opposition before it for over three decades until the tide of its influence had been weakened by the regimented mediocrity of most of their successors, and was finally spent upon the hard rocks of the great depression. Nevertheless, most of our great federal buildings date from that period between 1900 and 1940. They are not the greatest, perhaps, but it would be hard to find a group of buildings in any other major city in this country to match Henry Bacon's Lincoln Memorial, Burnham's Union Station, the District Building by Cope and Stewardson, Kelsey and Cret's Pan American Union Building, Cret's Federal Reserve Building, the National Archives by John Russell Pope, and Cass Gilbert's Supreme Court Building. In its declining years the City Beautiful spawned that great indigestible group of buildings known as the Federal Triangle, and has even been unjustly accused of posthumously giving birth to the Rayburn Building, which is still, I believe, under construction.

The fourth and final phase is that period we are presently in the midst of, or more hopefully, at the end of. Weaned on the thin milk of the 30's, and fed thereafter on a balanced

diet of efficiency studies, cost analysis, and manufacturers' catalogues, it is a federal architecture still to be named. It is more closely related to the new faceless commercial office buildings of the city today than to the federal buildings of the past, for it is designed for the same purpose: To enclose as many federal employees as possible for approximately the same cost per square foot. There is no need to elaborate the point further. An occasional fine building designed for the government breaks away from this dominant pattern, but it is most likely to be a building out of the urban setting, a building like Saarinen's Terminal Building at Dulles Airport, where impressive architecture has been created by an imaginative solution to a new, or newly phrased, problem. There are hopeful signs, to be sure, that we may witness an intensified search for excellence in federal architectural design, but I suspect there may yet be some missing directions on the path leading to that goal.

We have had several comprehensive plans for the City of Washington, and several more limited studies of the downtown area since the report of the Park Commission at the beginning of the century, but none have matched its wonderful balance and its confident appraisal of the architectural, sculptural, recreational, and technical needs of the city of its day. It is still an inspirational as well as a practical document, and in this respect it differs from later plans which have at times been little more than glorified traffic studies. The Pennsylvania Avenue Report is closer to the spirit of the Park Commission Report, but it is of course a far more limited study. One striking difference between the earlier study and the report of the President's Council on Pennsylvania Avenue is the lack, in the latter report, of any specifically defined character for the new buildings that are proposed to form a great part of the spaces within the boundaries of the plan. This was done quite deliberately, and the alternating facades of stripes and grids that are present in the renderings and model of the plan indicate noncommitment rather than a suggested architectural treatment. It is stated in the report, "for the sake of further lively variety, owners would be left free to put in their own choice of design and materials, reaching from the uniform arcades to the cornice line." Now they don't really mean quite that, of course; they mean that the owners are free to put in a choice of design and materials that will be

<sup>2</sup> Moore, Charles. Daniel H. Burnham, Architect, Planner of Cities. Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1921. Vol. 1, pp. 62-63.

acceptable to the Fine Arts Commission, the Planning Commission, the Pennsylvania Avenue Council, the Board of Zoning Appeals, the District of Columbia Building Department, and, if it happens to be a Federal Office Building, there will doubtless be several other interested participants.

The point I wish to make is simply this: In this particular area, the architectural design of proposed new building above the street level, the Pennsylvania Avenue Report is silent; any guidance or controls of that part of the urban design will necessarily be negative rather than positive in nature. This is in sharp contrast to the Park Commission's report, which sought to change and, in their minds, improve architectural tastes as well as planning concepts. Some of the buildings, bridges and monuments that were delineated in the pale light of Jules Guerin's haunting renderings that accompanied the report were constructed in scarcely modified form as long as twenty-five years later.

It may seem at this point that I am advocating a return to the ideals of the City Beautiful movement, including its conviction that the classic revival style is the only suitable one for important buildings in the Nation's capital, but this is not the case. It is not simply that we live in a different age, with problems that must be solved in ways far different from the past; but some of the ideas, if not the ideals, of that period would be unacceptable to us now. It was seriously proposed, you may recall, to remodel the old State, War, and Navy Building to conform to the design of the Treasury and to rebuild all the buildings on Lafayette Square with a uniform façade similar to those on the Federal Triangle buildings. Two pieces of that reconstruction were, in fact, executed—the Treasury Annex and the Chamber of Commerce Building, an incomplete addition, as it turned out, to the museum of architectural styles that line the square. The preservation of landmarks of architectural, cultural, or historic value which add character as well as beauty to the body of the city should never become a process of embalming, but rather a continuous process of creation and recreation; today we tend to take a more tolerant view of some of the architecture we have inherited from the past, particularly if it is a significant example of its period.

It is high time, nevertheless, to return to

some of the principles that brought life and spirit to the plans of the Park Commission for a more beautiful city. We desperately need a new vision of the city, not a new blueprint; we need the hand of the designer again before we continue to grind out more volumes of working drawings. The formula for accomplishing this is probably still a valid one: Take four good men—two architects, a landscape architect, and an artist—who are of proven ability, character, and experience. Give them a year to study, discuss, plan, and prepare their report, not to act as a committee—commuting from their places of work to meet once or twice a month—but to act as the Park Commission did, devoting their full time and energies to the task for a period of many months. Give them the authority and prestige they need by special executive or congressional appointment, and funds sufficient to enable them to present their ideas in a handsome manner. They would not be a substitute to carry on the continuing vital work of the National Capital Planning Commission; not a replacement for the Fine Arts Commission in its role of providing guidance for proposed new federal and civil design; and not an enlarged version of the Pennsylvania Avenue Council, appointed to study and report on a specific problem of urban planning. Rather, they must be a closely allied group of artists far enough removed from the pressures of day by day problems of the city to take an unhurried look into the future, and to tell us what that future might be if we have the will to make it so.

The support of the government in launching a study of this nature is, I believe, the most important single step that could be made at the present time. But while awaiting those revelations that would accompany that new vision of the city, let us return to a few problems of federal architecture that we might profitably examine right now.

One problem is the selection of the best architects for the design of buildings commissioned by the federal government. Another is the inherent difficulty, assuming that the project in question is in the hands of a good architect, of the government acting as a good or effective client in the process of producing a distinguished architectural design. Neither of these problems is new—some of Latrobe's letters to Jefferson relating his problems in dealing with paperwork, officialdom, harassing



criticism, and crippling economies could have been written, with minor changes, only yesterday. It would be unusual, I'll grant, for an architect today to take his troubles directly to the President, who as a fellow architect would be inclined to be sympathetic.

The selection of an architect who will bring the best possible knowledge and skills to the task of planning a new federal building is not simply a matter of avoiding the appointment of one who may be more talented politically than architecturally. The city as a whole can suffer as much from the unrelated exhibitionism of a gifted, but highly individual artist who is commissioned to do the wrong building. In many respects, one of the most successful relationships of the federal government with architects has been that of the Office of Foreign Buildings in carrying out the program for the design and construction of government buildings abroad. The extraordinary percentage of successes that distinguish this effort is in good measure due to the work of their architectural advisory board and to the caliber of the respected members of the profession who have served upon it. No architect of merit can resist a challenge to produce his best possible work if he is given the confidence that careful selection will allow. There is no excuse for poor, or merely mediocre, federal buildings—not even post offices—either in Washington or elsewhere in the country. The selection of architects to design these buildings should not be so cautious as to rule out the possibility of an occasional mistake, but in all cases should be based upon the architect's proven ability to produce good architecture, not good press releases or large political contributions.

The second matter is in many ways a more difficult one. One of the oldest and truest sayings of the profession is that it takes two people to make a good building—a good architect and a good client. A good client must necessarily have the incentive to commission and encour-

age the creation of a work of distinguished architecture, and have the undivided authority to make the decisions that will allow this to come about. How many architects have been frustrated and dismayed by the phrases, "This can't be done because they will not approve it" or "This must be changed because they want it done." The identity of the mysterious "they" is often difficult to discover. Frequently these expressions could be translated into something like, "We would rather not do this because my boss thinks the Commissioner wouldn't like to be bothered." It is no accident that the best works of architecture result from a face-to-face collaboration of the architect with the client, who must be prepared to support the architect's suggestions that the program be developed in a way that will make good design possible, and, as necessary, that it be modified during the course of the work to strengthen the unity and purpose of the design.

A gifted man like George Hadfield, who in his youth had received the gold medal of the Royal Academy—the highest architectural honor the English could grant an aspiring young architect—died bitterly disappointed that his talents were denied the opportunities they might have had. Even so today, there is a great untapped reservoir of ability to help build the Great Society, latent in the ranks of architects, sculptors, and artists who have not yet been called upon to do their share in its creation.

The Great Society must be more than a well-fed, well-dressed and well-housed society, living in peace with its neighbors. It must be a society where the great traditions of art from the past sustain us and where our architectural vision of the city of tomorrow stays far enough in advance of our present time to act as a beacon and objective rather than lagging ineffectively behind the path of those unguided forces that are reshaping our cities and the surrounding countryside.

# PANEL DISCUSSION

**1 S. DILLON RIPLEY**

Secretary  
Smithsonian Institution

**2 JOHN B. CABOT**

Chief Architect  
National Park Service

**3 N. E. HALABY**

Administrator  
Federal Aviation Agency

**4 ANITA J. MOLLER**

Chief Interior Designer  
Foreign Buildings  
Operations, Department of State

1



2



3



4

## **APPLICATIONS OF CREATIVE DESIGN**

DECEMBER 17, 1964







AS DIRECTOR OF THE PRESTIGIOUS SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION, S. DILLON RIPLEY INFLUENCES THE AFFAIRS OF A SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL COMPLEX EMBRACING THE MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY, THE MUSEUM OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, THE NATIONAL ZOO, THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART, AND THE FREER GALLERY OF ORIENTAL ART. (OPPOSITE PAGE, HEADQUARTERS BUILDING OF THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION.)

**DR. RIPLEY:** I am delighted to be here today to moderate at this panel discussion on Design in the Federal Government, a subject about which I had not been deeply concerned until I came here to work at the Smithsonian Institution. I am very much interested in design, having thought during part of my misspent youth that I might become an architect. I do feel that the art or practice of architecture is one of the most trying with which I have been acquainted. I have actually built a house myself, and I am well aware of the pitfalls ranging from plumbing to exterior appearance.

It certainly is true that in a city such as Washington, one is constantly under frightful compulsion to perform excellently in terms of architecture. This compulsion tends to restrict and limit design to a set of ordered patterns, which tend to reproduce themselves over and over again. It is almost impossible, I suppose, to escape from this. Yet I always take the greatest delight in the fact that my office is in a building that flamboyantly escapes from any such pattern or routine. I refer to the classic and very handsome structure that is the headquarters building for the Smithsonian Institution. Certainly it would be a ghastly disaster if that building were ever to be destroyed, because in its flamboyance, in its careless elegance, and in its variety, it represents a **leit motiv** that strikingly contrasts to the sort of monolithic stereotypes lining the sides of the Mall.

I think that we are getting away from this sort of thing more today, and this certainly is of the greatest importance for the future. I recall that when the National Gallery, which I consider a magnificent building, was built, it was bitterly attacked by architectural critics. By

now we have come to accept the National Gallery as a handsome building. In fact, my even bringing this up may be puzzling to some of you. And so architects today rather wistfully look at the National Gallery and say they often wish they could build a columned building themselves.

The recent experience with the Museum of History and Technology of the Smithsonian Institution, which I inherited when I came down here, was another example of a building that in effect had to be built. The instant it was built it raised virulent criticism. It is true that it is a large monolithic structure, and therefore becomes rather heavy and perhaps in a sense monotonous. But it is not quite finished yet, and I urge you to be patient. In the first place, there is going to be a fountain on the Constitution Avenue side, which will be, I hope, very handsome. I have been subjecting my whims and interests as an amateur engineer of waterworks on the architect, causing him sleepless nights and a mild ulcer, but I think the building is going to be handsome. At night, it is very handsome and quite striking, I think, with its vertical panels of light. I still think that in a strange and splendid way, one must have a kind of monolithic progression in buildings along an avenue like Constitution Avenue.

The great problem about the world and the world-wide impact of American architecture is the fact that it must be greatly varied because circumstances and environments are varied. This is where I think architects concerned with the federal government have an enormous and fascinating opportunity to be flexible and different.

We have three talented and distinguished speakers, and I look forward to their words, with the greatest interest, as I am sure you do.





JOHN B. CABOT HOLDS THE POSITION OF CHIEF ARCHITECT FOR THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, AN AGENCY CHARGED WITH THE DUTY TO CONSERVE THE SCENERY, THE NATURAL AND HISTORIC OBJECTS OF OUR NATION SO THAT THE HERITAGE WE ENJOY TODAY WILL BE AVAILABLE IN EQUAL OR GREATER MEASURE TO FUTURE GENERATIONS. (SHADE STRUCTURE, CAPE HATTERAS, N. C., OPPOSITE PAGE.)

**MR. CABOT:** Government architecture is in truth an enormous undertaking. Each year hundreds of buildings, big and small, are being designed and erected across the entire face of the United States. They are conceived for every type of environment. Impinging their masses on the dense urban areas, more subdued perhaps in suburban and small city settings, environmentally appropriate in scenic vistas, federal buildings encompass the whole gamut of construction. They are in every climatic situation, every region. Besides the territorial limits of the fifty states, governmental architecture is in many foreign countries. Now the question may be asked, how can the most powerful nation on earth contribute its talents to a fine and lasting architecture?

Throughout his brilliant career, President John F. Kennedy was a champion of aesthetics, encouraging a finer cultural response in all of the arts. Architecture was one of his deepest concerns, and thoughts he expressed are the basic creed of those who face the daily problem of conceiving finer buildings for all the people and improving the image of federal architecture. His **Guiding Principles** read in part: "The policy shall be to provide requisite and adequate facilities in an architectural style and form which will reflect the dignity, enterprise, vigor, and stability of the American government. Major emphasis should be placed on the choice of designs that embody the finest contemporary American architectural thought. Design must flow from the architectural profession of the government and not vice versa."

Here then is the challenge. It is one for all of us. The administrators and executives as well as the designers and architects have a duty to perform. It is not always easy to achieve a commendable solution. Where architecture must be considered in a total sense of the complete environment, the physical realities of materials are only one aspect of the design problem. In configurations of red tape and committee judgment, progress is sometimes

measured at a snail's pace. It is safe to predict that the search for the finest contemporary American architectural thought will continue. New and vital solutions will be found.

The current trend is to approach the summit through two-word symbols. Internationally there is "Peaceful Coexistence," politically and domestically there is the "New Frontier," and more recently the "Great Society." Architecturally, we have one also. It is not new, but is gathering momentum as a convenient symbol of a more thoughtful approach. It is "Environmental Design." In this context Frank Lloyd Wright's Guggenheim museum can be seriously criticized, regardless of the validity of his statement or an evaluation of whether it is a contribution to architecture. Sited in an urban, largely town house neighborhood it entirely destroys the surrounding environment.

Environmental Design has some of the aspects of an all enshrouding tent, for no two distinguished architects would agree to either its definition or to a similar design solution to a given problem. The truly dedicated designer feels an internal compulsion to a studied, but personalized statement. The design phase of architecture certainly is a form of art and possibly is the exception drawn from history that there is no economic place for the artist. There are however, many fine, indeed brilliant, designers who lack certain other architectural talents and fail to achieve an acceptable economic base. The frustrated yet talented designers far outnumber those who have been able to gain recognition.

It is a dilution of talent to expect those of artistic sincerity to also be administrators and politicians. Yet, today the ingredients of these two disciplines are essential to the production and erection of creative architecture, particularly at the federal government level.

Stimulating architecture in government is not achieved by a simple course of action. It is a complicated procedure with many seem-



ingly insurmountable obstacles. The way to the successful culmination of a project is strewn with pressures, committees, bureaucracy, and, in dealing with private architects, a lack of knowledge of the system of checks, balances, and political interest.

Two examples come to mind. The original chapel for the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs took an unholy lacing from the Congress. Here we had an example of those who are extremely knowledgeable in one field becoming architectural design critics. The whole issue could have been avoided had the architects had the foresight to clear their design in the spirit of information and friendly cooperation with the Colorado delegation. Having failed to do this, however, the problem was aired without friends. Its demise was guaranteed. The second example cannot be pinpointed as it is still under consideration, but again, on a big project, architects failed to communicate their ideas to those in political control and now find themselves with these forces arrayed against them. The result will either be a major compromise, destroying the architectural integrity of the project, or a new and less talented solution.

In the private practice of architecture, after the award of a building contract, the architect assumes the judicial position of fair arbiter. He judges what the client has contracted to buy and at the same time provides the contractor with protection from unreasonable requests by the client. Private architects doing work for the government need a similar person to provide liaison. They need to deal with an architect who understands their problem and at the same time understands the systems, pressures, and committees of government. They need a sympathetic representative.

Habit patterns are strong in both employees and superiors. Agencies in fact have habit patterns. Generally speaking these patterns are conservative, because they provide a sense of security. Many a fine creative piece of architecture has been lost because of the failure to recognize innate conservatism. There is a resistance to change, particularly when the change has not been adequately discussed and explained. Creative architecture is a change, though good architecture may result from some built-in restraint supplied by the system.

Where there are so many judges and critics for every governmental project, there are also

certain key controls. "Bottleneck" has been used negatively and derisively. It also suggests constructively that the man who pulls the cork unleashes the fund of knowledge and activity enclosed. Experience indicates, and this is where hindsight absorbs the grief of defeat, that at each level of review and committee thinking, there are one or possibly two dominant individuals involved. One needs their support and endorsement in advance of the submission of a design solution. If the problem is adequately reviewed, explained, and endorsed by them, then at least at that level success has been achieved. In effect you have given the force of conservatism an opportunity to endorse, rather than resist, change. Even the most conservative mind recognizes that change is inevitable and that growth comes only through change.

It has been well stated, "No country can exercise political world leadership without exercising a degree of cultural leadership as well." To a surprising degree the image of United States architecture is fine abroad. Through the State Department's Foreign Building Service we have been exporting some of our finest architecture to foreign capitals. In London, Dublin, Oslo, New Delhi, Athens, Accra, Nairobi, and many more, there are embassies and consulates of the finest design. The architects are familiar names, a cross section of the great competencies of the United States. The seriousness with which each architect executed his commission is a tribute to our culture, for they all realized that the true image of this country and democracy was theirs and theirs alone to encourage. We have some superb examples at home too. In the suburbs of Washington, at Dulles International Airport in Virginia, the Federal Aviation Agency commissioned a masterpiece by the late Eero Saarinen. The terminal building is a pacemaker of its time and a visual legacy in which all Americans can take pride. Perhaps it is significant that a building of this untrammelled expression of form and space should first appear in metropolitan Washington.

The monumentality of Saarinen's airport building stands in direct contrast to the simple informality of the Visitor Center at the Wright Brothers National Memorial in North Carolina; this building was recently cited by Wolf Von Eckardt, well-known architectural critic, as a "distinguished and fearlessly modern build-

ing." In both cases the communication of an idea was a part of the architectural problem: to speak artistically and intelligibly of technology and invention.

The National Park Service motivation is twofold. Not only do we hope to achieve fine buildings architecturally, but for the visiting public, we are planning an experience. There is an ample number of challenging buildings throughout the National Park Service at Dinosaur National Monument, Petrified Forest National Park, Gettysburg National Military Park, and Saratoga National Historical Park, to name a few. These were designed and conceived to be environmentally and culturally effective developments. Each has a distinct environment, achieving real architectural distinction by harmonizing with it and at the same time solving the problems of comfort, both physical and psychological, for the vacationing public. Not all solutions are bold and daring, for a quiet and dignified repose is certainly one facet of important architecture. But all are within the context of cultural growth.

In the National Recreation Areas now being created, many of them in the West, there is a new opportunity and challenge. Here is a mid-20th century expanding horizon. The architectural philosophy for recreation areas should be different. It needs to be strong, gay, and colorful. To be successful, to contribute to our growth, solutions must have the impact to

heighten the recreational state of mind. Buildings must, therefore, be compatible with their settings and their inspirational message. Any attempt at artistic subterfuge is a denial of their need, and placement in scenic settings calls for the correlation between land and man-made extrusions. In the West with its bold land forms, environmental architecture—the special effort to harmonize architectural forms with nature—is very serious business.

In these ways, our government makes its architectural and cultural impact felt throughout the country and the world. The secret, if there is one, to a great federal architecture lies in the minds of men. They are probably very few, but are placed in positions of authority, and know the devious paths and critical ways that tend to dilute the finest ideas to the lowest possible denominator of compromise. Those men of conviction whose responsibilities and authorities are equally commensurate can slowly, at an almost imperceptible pace, provide new solutions of inspired architecture. If this group of dedicated men, convinced that the image of federal architecture can be great, is sufficiently numerous, then even a snail's pace will result in an almost immediate transformation. Some 100 or 200 superb federal buildings could change the whole cultural impact. It is a goal that can be achieved and it warrants the finest and most serious consideration. The prospects of great federal architecture are improved with each success.







NAJEEB E. HALABY IS THE ADMINISTRATOR OF THE FEDERAL AVIATION AGENCY WHICH CONTROLS THE DULLES INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT NEAR WASHINGTON, D.C. THE SAARINEN-DESIGNED TERMINAL BUILDING AT THE AIRPORT IS RENOWNED BOTH FOR ITS ARCHITECTURE AND ITS INNOVATIONS IN ENGINEERING (PHOTO OPPOSITE PAGE).

**MR. HALABY:** To me, the airplane is the most beautiful design conceived—in its safety, symmetry, economy, optimum shape, and performance. So it seems to me that any agency associated with the airplane should try to achieve a similar cleanliness. My grandfather used to say that design should be done with neatness and dispatch. I got some idea of what he meant in that the time we take and the motions we make should be direct, economical, and effortless. When we look about us in Washington, we see the dullness, the drabness, the ugliness, and the great interruptions of motion, particularly in the interior of our buildings. We have tried to see if there were not new ways to use modern design engineering, some of which we have learned from the airplane itself.

I do not think that life in the federal government need be colorless and frustrating. I think that this is an unnecessary penalty to pay for bigness. Of course, a great deal of the difficulty in getting good design comes from the collective decision-making process and the fear of the source of the money. In all bureaucracy, whether domestic or foreign, municipal, state, or federal, these two inhibitions are present.

Let us contrast Dulles Airport with the National Airport constructed in the early 1930s. With its pier design, making the airport quite cumbersome for traffic, with limited flexibility for expansion, and with inadequate parking facilities, the old airport, as many of you know, has many disadvantages. Dulles Airport represents a new concept, familiar to most of you. It is the safest, largest, most efficient, and most beautiful airport in the world. The only thing it lacks is people who will buy tickets. Happily, there are so many tourists, so many people with good taste, so many curious about this achievement, that we have had to double the parking areas—but not that for the travelers. However, it is also a fact that during the past year Dulles has shown a healthy and satisfactory 15 per cent increase in traffic.

One of its glories is the mobile lounge, which enables the passenger to go to the air-

plane from the terminal, to move out to the airplane, rather than having the airplane come into the terminal, with the hazards, noise, and other difficulties involved. Further, there is easy accessibility to the baggage and ticket counters, flight boarding, and seating arrangements.

We have also tried through good landscape design to make the airport an attractive part of the landscape. When the trees grow and the shrubbery blossoms in the spring, I think you will share my pride in it. It is designed properly, we think, with the convenience and the arches of the traveler in mind. It was a great day when President Eisenhower and General Quesada, who originally got the money and authorized the airport, helped President Kennedy inaugurate Dulles Airport.

Further difficulty comes because there are so many opinions about what is **optimum** in design and appearance. However, it seems to me, particularly with the inspiration of people like the late President Kennedy and his wife, that the effort is worthwhile. We have tried, and we have made, as we say in technology, a breakthrough here and there. As an agency head, I will accept all the blame for these accomplishments and take only part of the credit, because I have a group of people willing to be a little daring and to dissent even though this is painful at times and certainly time-consuming. We have been able to enlist, in this campaign to improve the interior and exterior design of federal buildings, a distinguished group of advisors, several of whom are now on the Fine Arts Commission. The group includes William Walton, Gordon Bunshaft, Henry Dreyfuss, Andrew Ritchie, Elinor Douglas, Jane Wheeler, Aline Saarinen, Stanley Marcus, and Eliot Noyes. They all helped us to review ideas and to keep a consistent and, I hope, high standard in the things we have been able to do.

We started in 1961 to do what we could about the kind of situations we found. Now, of course, anyone coming into a government agency cannot start at the beginning. There is no such thing in the stream of government as stopping and obliterating and starting over, as

an engineer can do with a sheet of paper. For example, the magnificent airport, Dulles, is not of my doing. It is the conception of Eero Saarinen, and he was selected by my predecessor in office. What we did was to help get the airport finished, and to maintain the standards of excellence that the architect would have wanted.

An important part of the story of our headquarters is the "before." We had the old Emergency Hospital as our headquarters. We also had the Mather and Columbia buildings, and we fell heir to some outmoded hangars for our aircraft. In all, we were paying greatly in terms of dispersal, in terms of bad layout, wasted motion of personnel, and needless correspondence, as well as in the drag on morale that occurs in working in buildings such as these.

We did not design our new building at 800 Independence Avenue, S.W., and it does have some of the characteristics that Dr. Ripley refers to. However, it is highly functional in that we were given 1.15 million square feet in interior space. The space was susceptible to modular construction. We have high-speed elevators, escalator service, and low maintenance costs because President Kennedy and General Services Administrator Bernard Boutin and his associates authorized them—quite a departure for the interior of a government building.

A particularly interesting concept that we used is the circular conference room. At first one wonders who is boss. Yet the purpose is not to dictate, but to cerebrated. In the circular room we are able to focus on the problem in the center. It may be a model of the airspace over the United States used by airliners, as well as military and small planes. The meeting may be focused on how to make that airspace safer and more reliable. By working from a circular table, each participant is freer to speak. He is not looking up as much to see what I think as his boss or whether he is in the right. He is in the management circle, trying to solve a problem.

Still another concept of design that we feel worthy of consideration is placing the bosses—the section chiefs and the branch chiefs—in the center of things, and the staff people who do the work near the windows. With air conditioning, fluorescent, and other good lighting, windows are not needed for ventilation or for lighting.

Still another area where we improved design is in our centers to guide air traffic and our towers from which airport traffic is guided. These are a kind of relic of the lighthouse service, which was the origin of the Federal Aviation Agency. I. M. Pei has designed for us a beautiful, symmetrical, and highly functional air traffic control tower. This is for use all over the United States and, I hope, perhaps even around the world. Mr. Pei has also designed a tower for the smaller community, where we cannot spend as much money as the handsome model tower costs. The smaller design has been called the Junior or Poor Man's Pei.

All aspects of our interiors are better—better lighting, better air conditioning, and better flow of work. We also have room for expansion. Even in the basement we think there is room for color. The janitor might just have some taste.

We were eager to get across a strong impression of the work that the agency does, when we designed our offices. Because we had to buy signs anyway, we got some help in designing them. In other ways, we tried to carry through with both color and shape. The color happened to be a good red. It is called international orange in the civil aviation world. We have adopted it, and we call it FAA-red, if you will pardon the pun. The color, the shapes, the modern plain lines, and the flag are symbols we use. The agency seal is also incorporated in the airplanes. Our flag flies at 800 Independence Avenue just as it does at our other installations throughout the United States.

We have tried to make the best use of color throughout the agency. We have tried to use a special color combination in our headquarters building for each floor. I suppose you could say that I am in the red division. Other floors are bravely painted green, blue, orange, or yellow. These colors give the women a little trouble in matching their costumes but they soon adjust. We have used color in our auditorium and in our cafeteria. Our use of color is consistent and has been very good for morale.

In closing, if someone were to ask me if I would try to do this all over again, the answer would be "yes." It has not been easy, but here and there we have found very cooperative and imaginative people to work with, both inside and outside the agency, who have made the project worthwhile and successful.







THE JOB OF DESIGNING AND FURNISHING THE INTERIORS OF 110 EMBASSIES, 2 LEGATIONS, AND 166 MISSIONS AND OTHER AMERICAN FOREIGN SERVICE ESTABLISHMENTS FALLS TO THE STATE DEPARTMENT'S INTERIOR DESIGN SERVICE, HEADED SINCE 1949 BY ANITA J. MOLLER (INTERIOR, U.S. EMBASSY, DUBLIN, IRELAND, OPPOSITE PAGE).

**MISS MOLLER:** There is an art—not in the normal sense of producing a painting or a piece of sculpture, but that of diplomacy—which is the art of cordial association with people, states, and nations and of creating favorable impressions by the art of presentation.

Ambassadors are sent to various countries of the world to represent officially the interests of the United States and its citizens abroad. However, diplomacy does not always manifest itself vocally. It can manifest itself by example, by functional design of industrial and consumer products, a visual presentation of our democratic way of life.

Within the Department of State there is a comparatively silent and small organization, designated by the letters FBO (Foreign Buildings Operations) dedicated to that form of diplomacy, visual diplomacy, expressing itself in the housing of our official representative abroad.

The opportunity to promote and present the very best of United States design, in architecture as well as interior design, has been and is the high aim of the Foreign Buildings Operations. Here is a rare opportunity to place America's "best foot forward," to show the efficiency and dignity of the products of our free democratic country.

FBO long ago realized the importance of obtaining top level, professional people to create and present to the world all the very best in inspired architecture and interior design and decoration. As examples of good design, both architectural and interior, may I take you to two countries where recently United States embassy buildings have been constructed—Dublin, Ireland, and Baghdad, Iraq.

The Dublin chancery, completed early this year, has a symbolic shape—circular. According to the Irish press of March 28, 1963, the chancery symbolizes in a way the traditions of the United States in the world today. Being

round, the building faces in all directions. It is friendly and attractive from all angles. It is considered one of the outstanding buildings, not alone in Dublin, but in all Europe. Access to the building is over a sunken garden by bridges, then through the continuous facade into a rotunda, which is four stories high and sixty feet in diameter. Around this is an ambulatory corridor, serving the offices on three floors from which one can look back on the big rotunda below. The facade is composed of pre-cast concrete with reconstructed limestone finish, much in the manner of children's building blocks. Even the floor slabs made of pre-cast concrete sections were lifted into place. All furniture was manufactured and designed in the United States in contemporary lines, with the green of the Emerald Isles carried into some offices, as well as earth-tones of black, deep brown, and rust. All window curtains are American-made, white fiberglass. Of special interest is the large oval conference table, the top of which was constructed in the United States all in one piece of walnut.

To revert to the circular design once again, this form is a well-known Celtic-Christian motive and for centuries has been considered symbolic of unity, timelessness, tranquility, and order.

**The Iraq Times** of February 9, 1961, contained an article entitled, "Baghdad's Architectural Novelty," describing the new United States Embassy building in that city. It comprises the residence of the Ambassador, the chancery building, and an apartment building for the staff. The architectural design of these buildings was determined by the site, the brilliant Baghdad sun, the Tigris River, and the date and palm trees. The long narrow building site has been arranged in a series of court-like spaces separated and partially enclosed by the surrounding buildings. Each building has its own special shield or double roof to repel the heat of the brilliant Baghdad sun. Notable examples of functional design are the roof areas

of the chancery building and the Ambassador's residence, which have been designed to exclude the intense heat. The former has an accordion-shaped roof and the latter a parasol structure to reflect the heat and provide for the free movement of air above the building and the interior areas.

All the buildings have been completely furnished with the best of American designs, manufactured in the United States and through licensee arrangements abroad. The importance of adhering to the architectural concepts in the interior was taken into consideration by the use of functional, simple, contemporary

lines in furniture and in some of the gentle, subtle coloring with brilliant accents here and there.

There is an ever present challenge for those of us in creative fields to present to the world the American way of life.

What better way to do so than by the design of a man's home, his castle, whether large or small, whether marble, brick, or wood!

The challenge remains! Close to the hearts of all peoples are the dwellings they create in which to live and work. Let us endeavor to draw together men of different cultures and tongues by this link to diplomacy.





# **SUMMARY**

**WOLF VON ECKARDT**

Art Critic for  
the Washington Post

**MR. VON ECKARDT:** I think this has been a splendid, well-planned, and effective series of lectures. It has been right on target. And as a citizen I am grateful to the Department of Agriculture Graduate School and its director Dr. John B. Holden for providing this forum.

I said "right on target." What is the target?

We all agree with President Kennedy's hopes, expressed at Amherst shortly before his death, his hopes for an America that will steadily raise the standards of artistic accomplishment . . . for an America "which commands respect throughout the world not only for its strength, but for its civilization as well."

We are also, I hope, in agreement that the federal government hasn't done so well on this score in the past few decades. The Sam Rayburn Building is one shocking reminder. Others have been our postage stamps, our federal non-architecture until—out of the Department of Labor, of all places—President Kennedy's architectural directive came along and Karel Yasko of the GSA started to implement it.

And our horrible non-designed government posters and signs and printing. Just look at the Army, Navy, and Air Force recruitment posters. They are enough to make even the stoutest patriot run for the hills.

Enough. We all know this. Or do we?

What can we do about it?

The point that this series of lectures has made very well, I believe, is that like charity, the government's role in raising our standards of artistic accomplishment begins at home.

Arts councils, special art consultants, cultural centers, and special subsidies for the arts

are splendid things. But let us first start by having the government do better what it already does.

How?

August Heckscher told us what art and culture are all about and that the "sweet season of opportunity" has arrived.

Eliot Noyes defined design as a way in which you look at yourself and express yourself to others. (By this token, our Congressmen see themselves as opulent Roman imperialists, defending themselves on Capitol Hill against an indolent barbarian proletariat.)

Francis Lethbridge told us where we stand in the evolution of styles. And he said rightly that there is in this country a great, untapped reservoir of talented designers ready to be called upon to do their share in the creation of the Great Society.

But it was Ivan Chermayeff who put his finger on the root of the problem. He spoke of the need for a concern for quality. And that, he said, must begin with a **quality of intention**.

In the area of design—which is, if you will, a matter of style, of culture, of artistic accomplishment in everything we create from the GSA-issued paper cup to the FHA-issued city—we now have quality of intention at the very top. I have a strong feeling that President Johnson has fully understood what President Kennedy said in his last public speech at Amherst and that he intends to carry the torch forward.

I also have the feeling that not all, but a good many of the working designers in the working echelons of our government **care** and would like to do their best. Many of these people are here in this room.



But I'm afraid there is as yet far too little quality of intention in the all-important under-secretary and agency head and office chief level of our government.

And that's where it counts. If these guys really wanted some well designed printing, exciting exhibits, attractive postage stamps, beautiful posters and signs, good looking stationery, and livable cities . . . boy, they could get them as fast as they can get their black limousines out of the motor pool.

We could have a federal image as attractive and stylish and communicative as the

corporate image of IBM or Chase Manhattan or the Container Corporation.

We have living proof right here on the stage that it can be done: Mr. Halaby, the administrator of the Federal Aviation Agency. Great architecture and good design need not only great architects and good designers. They need great clients. Mr. Halaby is such a client. Now that he has told **us**, he should tell his colleagues in the other agencies and offices and divisions how to do it.

And impart to them a quality of intention and the intention to attain quality. Let us not miss this "sweet season of opportunity."

DESIGN

IN

THE

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

---







